

Who Is A Christian, Part 2

Greetings Montana in California! (That sounds kinda weird!) JUST KIDDING!

In my last letter to you, I began to explain the meaning of the term Christian. I have continued that subject in this letter. I pray that it helps you in your own spiritual growth.

The word “Christian” is used in multiple contexts by different sources, almost none of whom would agree on a definition of the term. For some, the term is very, very important. It defines their relationship with God and their hope of eternity. For others, it is simply a religious choice. To the Muslim, it is anyone from the West who is not a Muslim, and synonymous with the word atheist. Some use the word with great reverence. Others with great derision and hatred. So just who is a Christian? Is there a litmus test by which a person can be tested to prove whether or not they are truly a child of God?

Many – and I might say most – people who identify themselves as Christians cringe at the thought of such an idea. The American culture has taught us to believe that we are independent spirits with the right of self-determination, and therefore, the right to define terms as we please. For another person to put us to the test is considered offensive and hypocritical. But if this is so, why does the Bible go to such lengths to define the person who is truly a child of God?

Here’s a test. In the next couple of days, stop someone you believe to be a Christian and ask them if they are. He or she may surprise you with a very definite “Yes,” but it is unlikely. More often than not, that person will answer you with something like, “Well, sure, at least, I hope so. I believe in Jesus. I know that Jesus is real, and I try to do all the right things, and live a good life, and not hurt other people, etc.”

Some people might even argue that no one can really know for certain that they are a Christian apart from a hope that they hold in their hearts. However, the Apostle John wrote a letter (1 John in the New Testament) in which he said, “I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:17)

Most Christians, if asked to give evidence for whether or not they are truly a Christian, will point back to the time when they prayed a prayer and invited Jesus to come into their heart. Or, depending on their denomination or branch of Christianity, they might say something about a moment in their past when they experienced some event, such as a baptism, or an overwhelming feeling of emotion, or even that they come from a long line of believers.

But what does the Bible say about who is and who is not a Christian? My last letter began to answer that question. I would like to continue along that line of thought in this letter. The New Testament has much to say about this subject, but in this letter I will concentrate on the small book in the back of your New Testament called 1 John, written by the same man who wrote the Gospel of John and The Revelation. He was a disciple of Jesus.

Before embarking on this study, let me say first of all that there is nothing a person can do to become a Christian. Salvation is the work of God. It is a supernatural event in a person’s life. We

are not capable of supernatural power within the limitations of the flesh. So when we set out to define a Christian, please understand that I am not teaching that these are things that people can do to become a Christian or might do simply to prove they are Christian. Instead, understand that these are things that define Christians.

An apple can be red or green or yellow, has an outside skin we refer to as the peel, an inner flesh, a core, a stem, and a very distinctive taste. Those are the things that define the apple. There might be other fruits that are red, green or yellow, that have an outer skin and an inner flesh, a core and a stem, but none of them have the distinctive taste of an apple. We might at first be confused by the fruit's appearance, but one taste will reveal the truth.

The same is true when we look at those elements that define a Christian. These are not things we need to strive to achieve or to become because we want to become a Christian or a better Christian. These are things that will be true of a Christian – maybe not from the moment they are saved, but eventually. These are the things that a saved person is in the process of becoming. They may not all be true of you yet, so do not get discouraged or overwhelmed. Remember that, just as salvation is a miraculous work of God, so is sanctification – the process of God turning you into a true son of God.

Right about here, let me encourage you to lay aside this letter. Get out a pen and paper and your Bible and turn to 1 John. Read all five chapters. It will not take very long. Then go back and read it again. This time, begin to list all the things that John says defines a child of God. The list will be long.

Once you have done that, read the book a third time. Then make a list of the characteristics or habits of those who are not Christian, even though they may claim to be.

Once your lists are complete, come back to the letter and compare your lists to the ones I have included in the next part of this letter. Do not worry if you have omitted things I have included or if you have things I have omitted. None of our lists is meant to be perfect. The idea is to understand that the Bible very clearly defines the term Christian.

I pray that from this study, you will understand two things:

The term Christian is clearly defined in Scripture.

You may have a better idea of what God intends to happen in the life of a Christian.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew to become His disciples, He said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." He called them to follow Him so that He could make something out of them that fulfilled the mission of the kingdom of God.

That is what He intends to do to all who claim Him as Lord and Savior.

God bless.

Pastor Dan

THE APOSTLE JOHN'S DEFINITION OF A CHRISTIAN* [PDF](#)

1. Walks in the light (1 John 1:7)
2. Keeps his (Jesus') commandments (1 John 2:3)
3. Keeps his (Jesus') word (1 John 2:5)
4. Walks in the same way that Jesus walked (1 John 2:6)
5. Loves other Christians (1 John 2:10)
6. Does the will of God (1 John 2:17)
7. Continues in fellowship with other Christians (1 John 2:19)
8. Has an anointing from the Holy One (God) (1 John 2:20)
9. Knows the truth (1 John 2:20)
10. Acknowledges the Son (that Jesus is the Christ) (1 John 2:23)
11. Remains faithful to things taught from the beginning (1 John 2:24)
12. Has the Holy Spirit to teach him what is right (1 John 2:27)
13. Filled with courage, not ashamed of Christ (1 John 2:28)
14. Will do what is right (1 John 2:29)
15. Has an eager expectation of Christ's return and his transformation (1 John 3:3)
16. Keeps himself pure (1 John 3:3)
17. Practices righteousness (1 John 3:7)
18. Cannot practice habitual sin (1 John 3:9)
19. Is hated by the world (1 John 3:13)
20. Loves Christian brotherhood (1 John 3:14; 4:21)
21. Ought to lay down his life for other Christians (1 John 3:16)
22. Loves, not just in word or talk, but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18-19)
23. Keeps God's commandments and does what pleases Him (1 John 3:22-24)
24. Assured of salvation by the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:24)
25. Confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 John 4:2)
26. Listens to those who speak the truth of God (1 John 4:6)
27. Loves others (1 John 4:7, 11-12)
28. God has given his Holy Spirit (1 John 4:13)
29. Confesses that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 4:15; 5:1)
30. Abides in love (1 John 4:16)
31. Does not fear (1 John 4:18)
32. Loves God and obeys his commandments (1 John 5:2)
33. Overcomes the world through faith (1 John 5:4-5)
34. Believes in the Son of God (1 John 5:10)
35. Has the Son (1 John 5:12)
36. Does not keep on sinning (1 John 5:18)
37. Keeps himself from idols (1 John 5:21)

**Please note that this list is not an exhaustive list. Others who read this letter of the Apostle John will very likely note other characteristics of a Christian that are unintentionally omitted from this list. Many items in the list are paraphrases of each quality based on my own understanding. Many are repetitive. The significant thing to note is quantity of evidences John gives for defining a Christian.*

THE APOSTLE JOHN'S DEFINITION OF A NON-CHRISTIAN*

1. Walks in darkness while claiming to walk in the light (1 John 1:6)
2. Lies and does not practice truth (1 John 1:6)
3. Claims to have no sin (1 John 1:8, 10)
4. Claims to know Christ but does not keep his commandments (1 John 2:4)
5. Hates his Christian brothers (1 John 2:9, 11)
6. Blinded by darkness so does not know where he is going (1 John 2:11)
7. Loves the world (1 John 2:15)
8. Does not remain in Christian fellowship (1 John 2:19)
9. Denies that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22-23)
10. Does not recognize a Christian (1 John 3:1)
11. Habitually practices sin (1 John 3:6-9)
12. Does not practice righteousness (1 John 3:10)
13. Does not love the brotherhood (1 John 3:10)
14. Does not love (1 John 3:14)
15. Hates the brotherhood and is equal to a murderer (1 John 3:15)
16. Closes his heart against a brother in need (1 John 3:17)
17. Does not confess Jesus (1 John 4:3)
18. Speak from the viewpoint of the world (1 John 4:5)
19. Does not listen to those who speak the truth of God (1 John 4:6)
20. Does not love and therefore does not know God (1 John 4:8)
21. Lives in fear (1 John 4:18)
22. Says he loves God, but hates his brother, and is therefore a liar (1 John 4:20)
23. Does not believe God (1 John 5:10)
24. Calls God a liar (1 John 5:10)
25. Does not believe what God has testified about Christ (1 John 5:10)

**Please note that this list is not an exhaustive list. Others who read this letter of the Apostle John will very likely note other characteristics of a false Christian that are unintentionally omitted from this list. Many items in the list are paraphrases of each quality based on my own understanding. Many are repetitive. The significant thing to note is quantity of evidences John gives for identifying those who are not part of the family of God, even though they may profess to be.*